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AN IDYL OF THE RHINE

LOUISA PALMER MYERS

ILLUSTRATED



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AN IDYL OF THE RHINE

BY
LOUISA PALMIER MYERS
ILLUSTRATED

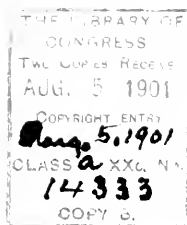
Fresh dewdrops clinging to a rose,
That in some fragrant garden grows,
Are not more passing fair to see,
In their transparent purity,
Than tender hearts that fondly cling,
To love, in youth's ambrosial Spring.



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L
LONDON



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AN IDYL OF THE RHINE.

The Prelude,

'Tis of a summer's sweet
romance
I sing. Plan as we may mere
chance
Will sometimes change our lives and
bring
Unlooked for happiness. I
sing
Of love in its divinest
form,—
The love of youth, intensely
warm
Yet innocent and pure as
snow;
Of tender, throbbing hearts
aglow

An Idyl of the Rhine.

With passion's first enkindled
flame,
I sing; and how two strangers
came
To meet in an unusual
way:
A simple maiden, I will
say,
And daring youth of high
degree.
Of classic shores beyond the
sea,
Where mountains rear their heads so
high
As, seemingly, to touch the
sky;
Of ruined castles on the
Rhine,
Where grape and ivy
intertwine;
Of summer days there idly
spent
Mid pleasures gay, while fancy
lent
A tender charm to
everything,
I faithfully and fondly
sing.

The Meeting.

The Meeting.

At Bingen, in the month of
 May,
I chanced to be one gala
 day,
Amid a gay and festive
 scene
Enlivening a garden
 green.
Loud strains of music filled the
 air
And wine flowed freely
 everywhere ;
And brimming mugs of foaming
 beer
Dispensed their effervescent
 cheer.
The portly dames and damsels
 fair,
With heads of shining golden
 hair,

An Idyl of the Rhine.

The gay gallants and martial
air
Of uniforms assembled
there,
The drinking and the
revelry,
All, all were strangely new to
me.
My chaperone—indulgent
dame,
I ne'er shall cease to bless her
name—
Grew weary soon, and let me
stray
At will 'mid that assembly
gay.
Entranced, I wandered here and
there,
Regardless of remark or
stare.
At length I joined a moving
throng
Of people. As I pressed
along
Beside a crowded, festal
board,
Where clink of glass and clank of
sword



FELIX.

The Meeting.

Proclaimed the merry
 revelry
Of some of Deutschland's
 chivalry,
A silken fringe about my
 gown
Became entangled. With a
 frown
I tried to jerk the meshes
 loose
But only tighter drew the
 noose
Which held me fast ; for, strange to
 tell,
A button on a gay
 lapel
Had truly been lassoed while
 I
So heedlessly was passing
 by ;
And, instantly, to my
 surprise,
I saw a Black Hussar
 arise,
His face abeam with
 merriment
O'er this unlooked for
 accident.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

Politely bowing low to
me,
He caught the fringe up
gracefully,
And turned and twisted it
around—
Wrong way of course—until he
wound
The shank so tight that skillful
hand
Could not undo the knotted
strand.
Confused, I stood and mutely
gazed,
At him, I fear, like some one
dazed,
For never was so fair a
face
United with more manly
grace.
The limpid azure of his
eyes
Outrivald soft Italian
skies,
And curly locks of golden
hair
Waved o'er a forehead wondrous
fair;

The Meeting.

The emblem of a crown he
bore
Across the shoulder-straps he
wore,
For Brunswick claimed his right to
wield
His sword upon the
battlefield;
Full five feet ten, with princely
air,
He had no martial equal
there.
His jolly comrades laughed
outright
At our unusual helpless
plight,
And gaily joked him till he
grew
Impatient. Without more
ado
He, utt'ring some strange, foreign
word
Withdrew a small, short-bladed
sword,
And with its point, so bright and
keen,
Cut off the button, smooth and
clean.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

“You’re very kind,” I said, but
 he
Just smiled and bowed and gazed at
 me.
While thus he stood, a god
 divine,
His blue eyes looking into
 mine,
His glances flashed a thrill through
 me
Surcharged with sweetest
 ecstasy.
From out their sources in my
 heart,
I felt the crimson rivers
 start
And through their channels hotly
 flow
Beneath that keen, electric
 glow;
And, tho’ released, a subtler
 snare
Than silken meshes held me
 there
Till some one lightly touched mine
 arm,
And partially dispelled the
 charm,

The Meeting.

By saying: "Mary, don't you
know
'Tis growing late and time to
go?"
Becoming fidgety, no
doubt,
My chaperone had sought me
out
And seemed to view with much
surprise
My blushing cheeks and downcast
eyes.
All trembling with sensations
new
At length I stammered forth
"Adieu."
The soldier, sighing, bowed
again,
And answered low: "*Auf
wiederschen.*"
The sleep of youth is like the
dew
Which falls at evening to
imbrue
The drooping plants; no
wakefulness
Nor troubled dreams to sore
distress

An Idyl of the Rhine.

Its peaceful slumber; angels
 keep
Kind watches o'er such gentle
 sleep,
For pleasing visions drive
 away
The small vexations of the
 day
And leave the freshened brain
 serene
As some awakened valley
 green:
So, in my dreams that night, I
 heard
The singing of a
 mocking-bird
That warbled forth a sweet
 refrain
E'er ending thus: "*Auf*
 wiederschen."

The Flirtation.

The Flirtation.

“Fair Bingen!” Old historic
town
Of feudal lords and bold
renown!
Of vine-clad hills and ruined
towers!
Of music, mirth and fragrant
flowers!
How very fair it seemed to
me
With all its martial
gaiety
And glowing, ruddy faces,
where
I failed to find a trace of
care;
How pleasing to my
vanity
Its easy, well-bred
gallantry.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

Ere long I learned the Black
Hussar
Was Felix, young
von Schönstewahr,
A scion of a noble
line
Of princely dwellers near the
Rhine.
A consciousness of native
grace
Of every movement, form and
face,
No doubt emboldened him to
seek
An opportunity to
speak
To me whene'er we chanced to
be
In some gay, public
company.
By every pleasing, artful
wile,
That doth the female heart
beguile,
The gallant soldier sought to
prove
His admiration and his
love,

The Flirtation.

When in a crowd, sometimes I'd
 see
A white glove waft a kiss to
 me,
Or else I'd hear a deep-drawn
 sigh
And, turning, quickly catch his
 eye,
And then receive a melting
 glance
That would my very soul
 entrance.
But, tho' my heart o'erflowed with
 joy
My girlish shyness made me
 coy.
In doubt and fear, at first I
 knew
Not what to say or what to
 do ;
So, blushing, simply feigned to
 be
Unconscious of his
 gallantry.
But love will conquer fear or
 pride
And have its way, whate'er
 betide.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

One day I yielded to his
 guile;
I timidly returned his
 smile,
Then listened to his pleading
 and,
Most meekly, let him kiss my
 hand.
No doubt all this was wrong, as
 he
Had dared to pay his court to
 me
Unsanctioned by the formal
 code
Of presentation *à la*
 mode;
But I was scarcely eighteen
 then,
And he the courtliest of
 men.
My friends all called young Felix
 bold
And gave him looks severely
 cold.
Perhaps I might have done so
 too
Had he but turned his eyes of
 blue

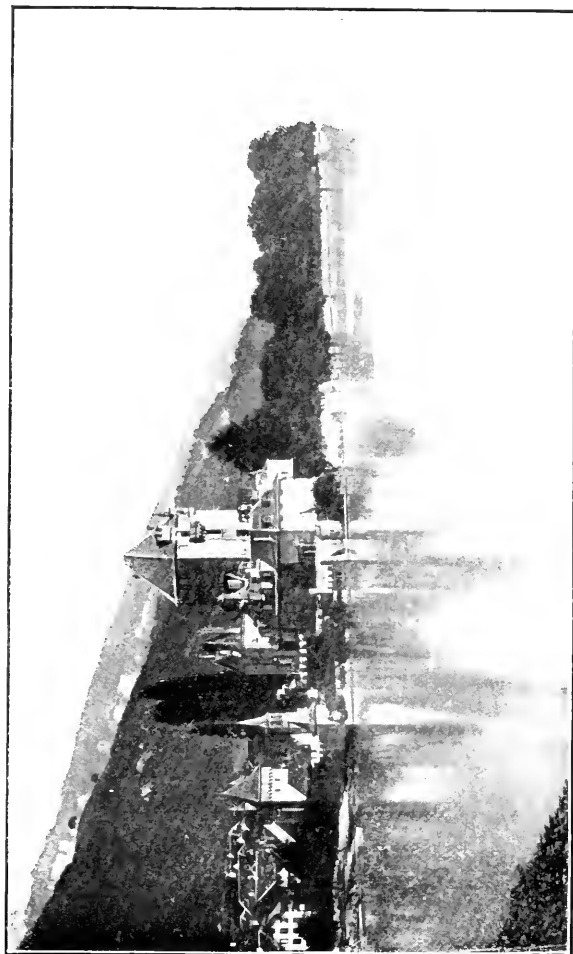
The Flirtation.

Toward some more favored friend of
mine
And worshiped only at her
shrine—
The difference one may plainly
see
’Twixt worshiping a friend or
me.
For women rarely fail to
find
Excuses for a lover
kind ;
Each deems the passion she
inspires
A holy flame of pure
desires,
Yet thinks it duty to
repress
A sister’s show of
tenderness.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

Love's Enchantment.

There is no earthly
paradise
O'er-canopied by cloudless
skies,
But sometimes even here we
find
A transient Eden for
mankind:
When Heaven opens with a
kiss
The common world is veiled in
bliss.
Young Felix, brave and
resolute,
With passion boldly pressed his
suit.
In spite of frowns we sat or
strayed—
Most lover-like—beneath the
shade



THE THUN.

Love's Enchantment.

Of linden boughs, while fancy
 grew
From friendship to affection
 true.
Life soon became a sweet
 routine
Of pleasures planned or
 unforeseen.
Up on the Nieder-Wahlden -
 height,
Where fair Germania charms the
 sight,
We'd sit for hours and sip our
 wine
And look down on the classic
 Rhine,
Whose waters flow in rippling
 rhyme
'Twixt Bingen fair and
 Rudesheim.
Among the crumbling, massive
 walls
Of stately old baronial
 halls
Where ivy twines and lizards
 play
At hide and seek, we'd ofttimes
 stray ;

An Idyl of the Rhine.

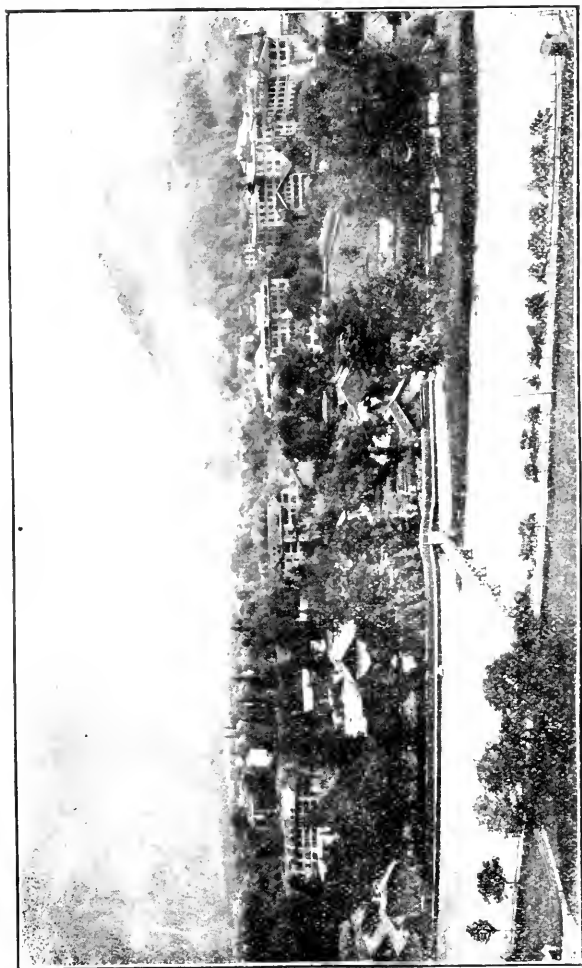
Dear Felix there wild legends
told
Of Deutschland's ruthless, warriors
bold
Who, in the feudal days of
old,
Supremely reigned o'er stream and
wold,
While I, with ghostly fear
impressed,
Drew closer to his manly
breast.
When Phœbus, smiling god of
day,
Had turned his beaming face
away,
And Luna, gentle queen of
night,
Refused us her bewitching
light,
We sought a summer garden
where
We breathed the cool, refreshing
air
And listened to gay
minstrelsy,
Or strains of classic
melody,

Love's Enchantment.

Till lips could only well
 express,
Through contact, all our
 tenderness ;
When starless, threat'ning skies
 above,
Looked frowningly upon our
 love,
We whirled amid the giddy
 dance
And found sweet solace in a
 glance.
The course of true love, so they
 say,
Is not an even, loving
 way ;
But smoother roadway ne'er could be
 be
Than that so we trod,
 joyfully,
Thro' summer days that seemed to
 me
But moments in
 eternity ;
For frowning dames had had their
 say
And left me mistress of the
 day—

An Idyl of the Rhine.

'Tho' doubtless some o'er-anxious
friend
Oft wondered how it all would
end.
When verdant lawns lay brown and
dry
Beneath a scorching, summer
sky,
My Felix fondly followed
me
From Bingen to the Thuner
Sea.
And there, shut in by Alpine
heights,
We found a vale of new
delights.
Love echoed thro' the rugged
hills,
Love sparkled in the dauncing
rills,
Love breathed the fragrance of the
flowers
And sported in the leafy
bowers,
While we, like eager babes who
try
To catch a flitting
butterfly,



INTERLAKEN.

Love's Enchantment.

With flying footsteps there
pursued
'The wingèd god thro' glade and
wood—
We touched his plumes, we heard him
speak,
And felt his breath on lip and
cheek.
The heart from whence emotion
springs
Infolds a lyre with many
strings;
Its sweetest chords, till touched by
love,
Are silent. Angels from
above
Then seem to play with magic
hand
Upon each thrilling silv'ry
strand.
The music swells and fills the
air,
Resounding sweetly
everywhere.
When autumn tints began to
glow
Below the Jungfrau's veil of
snow,

An Idyl of the Rhine.

And flitting birds to gaily
flee
From foreign shores across the
sea
My Love and I too bade
adieu
To Alpine haunts and backward
flew
To those about our old
retreat
Beside the Rhine. Life seemed
complete.
Sweet passion pinioned in the
Spring,
Still soared aloft on joyous
wing,
'Mid dreamy skies of azure
hue
And rainbows charged with fragrant
dew.
Fresh dewdrops clinging to a
rose
That in some fragrant garden
grows,
Are not more passing fair to
see,
In their transparent
purity,

Love's Enchantment.

Than tender hearts that fondly
cling
To love, in youth's ambrosial
Spring.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

Parting Scenes.

Time's steady march cannot be
 stayed
By sighing youth and loving
 maid.
The glory of the harvest
 moon
Had come and gone; the paths were
 strewn
With yellow leaves; a dreamy
 mist
O'erhung the mountain tops and
 kissed
The fleecy clouds which flecked the
 sky;
The fiery glance of Phœbus'
 eye
Had lost its fierceness; somber
 night
Encroached upon the hours of
 light

Parting Scenes.

With steady pace ; October's
 breath
Had touched the leaves, and chilled to
 death
A tender, little mountain
 flower
That oft had charmed a passing
 hour ;
All round, the woodlands lately
 green,
Were now a variegated
 scene
Of gaudy tints ; from vine-clad
 wall
A drapery, like a Persian
 shawl,
Hung gaily down ; the autumn
 rain
Had brought the grass to life
 again,
And freshened thirsty brooks and
 rills,
Which dashed or rippled down the
 hills ;
It almost seemed another
 Spring,
With just a change of
 coloring.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

But with these passing changes
came
No change in love; 'twas e'er the
same
Enchantment; e'er the same sweet
spell
Which first had caused our hearts to
swell
With deep emotion. Nobly
true
Had Felix proved. His eyes of
blue
And rosy lips still plead a
cause—
Decreed to him by Nature's
laws
Long months before—as
ardently
As when he first made love to
me:
Thus, we absorbed in thought
sublime,
Loved on and took no note of
Time,
Till happiness and sorrow
lay
Divided by a single
day.

Parting Scenes.

A message from across the
 sea,
Which said, "Come home
 immediately,"
Awoke us from the dreamy
 trance
Of youthful lovers' first
 romance.
Ah, then, but not till then we
 knew
That Cupid's darts could punish,
 too!
The morning dawned most wondrous
 fair
Which heralded our keen
 despair;
Dear Felix with heroic
 pride,
Kept bravely up till
 eventide;
But when the cheering beams of
 light
Were lost in shadows of the
 night,
His courage failed, and anxious
 fears
Bedimmed his eyes with hopeless
 tears.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

Diseonsolate, our restless
 feet
Moved to and fro. Each dear
 retreat
Received a pure, baptismal
 flow
From lovers' eyes suffused with
 woe.
The moon arose above the
 towers,
Where we had passed so many
 hours
Of tenderness, and served to
 guide
Our footsteps up the mountain
 side ;
And as we sadly passed
 along
A path, still musical with
 song,
The night-birds in their leafy
 boughs
Were hushed to silence by our
 vows.
Altho' the tolling hour was
 late
We passed within the castle
 gate

Parting Scenes.

And fearlessly, at midnight,
 strayed
Thro' halls where ghostly moonbeams
 played.
Fatigued, we slowly mounted
 by
A stairway to a terrace
 high.
'Twas such a night as one might
 deem
Befitting love's most ardent
 dream.
A full moon, sailing round and
 bright,
Poured down a stream of silv'ry
 light
That flooded everything
 below,
And set the somber earth
 aglow;
Fresh mountain odors filled the
 breeze
Which stirred the foliage of the
 trees,
And gently fanned us as we
 stood
Surveying castle, stream and
 wood;

An Idyl of the Rhine.

We saw the waters of the
Rhine
Far, far below us gleaming
shine,
And heard the rushing current
roar
Along the winding, rocky
shore;
A cuckoo from a turret
high
Called to its mate with gutt'ral
cry;
The little lizards peeped
between
Their lattices of
ivy-green,
But finding strange intruders
there
Soon darted back with frightened
air.
Our hearts grew lighter 'neath the
power
Of that enchanting place and
hour,—
For who could pass his time in
sighs
While in the realms of
paradise?



ALTE SCHLOSS.

Parting Scenes.

What if the Future were
 unknown!
The Present, there, was all our
 own
And we were young and love was
 sweet
In that fair, Eden-like
 retreat.
Dear Felix drew me to his
 breast
And brow and cheek and lip
 caressed.
With arms entwined we gently
 sank
Upon a moss-grown rocky
 bank,
Where, doubtless, in the days of
 yore,
Fond lovers oft had sat
 before—
Some gallant knight and lady
 fair,
Alone, in sweet communion
 there;
In silent, voiceless
 tenderness
That feeble words cannot
 express;

An Idyl of the Rhine.

Two hearts attuned in
unison,
Two spirits mingled into
one.
Ah! how the precious moments
flew
Till daylight dawned, we never
knew!
We'd wisely planned to leave the
place
And prudently our steps
retrace
Before the envious morning
light
Aroused the sleepers of the
night.
But clearly rang a bugle
call,
And halos played about the
wall,
And still we fondly lingered
there
With dewy locks of tangled
hair
And dreamy eyes,—all sense of
sight
Still lost in visions of the
night—

Parting Scenes.

Unmindful of the dawning
 day
Or what the cruel world might
 say.
But Nature ever claims her
 right.
Exhausted by a restless
 night,
At length we languidly
 arose
To seek a moment's calm
 repose
Before the morning boat should
 bear
My aching heart away from
 there.
Then down the rugged mountain
 side,
With throbbing hearts, we quickly
 hied ;
And onward o'er the dewy
 lawn
Until we reached the
 pension.
The sleepy villagers, no
 doubt,
Were shocked to see a young girl
 out

An Idyl of the Rhine.

Without a proper
 chaperone,
Attended by a man
 alone,
At such an early hour; but
 we
Were much too pure in thought to
 be
Disturbed by
 impropriety—
For perfect love is
 sanctity.
Dear Felix would have lingered
 still
Had I not, by my strength of
 will,
Enforced him to withdraw, as
 we
Had planned that he should call for
 me.
Like some poor wretch who seeks his
 bed
With fumes of liquor in his
 head,
I fell on mine and senseless
 lay
As some exhausted
 debauchée,

Parting Scenes.

My heavy brain too dull to
be
The seat of pleasing
phantasy.
When I had slept an hour, or
more,
Loud knocking on my chamber
door
Awoke me—much to my
surprise,
I thought I had but closed mine
eyes.
I yawned and tried to rise in
vain,
Then turned and fell asleep
again.
But time and tide refused to
be
Retarded in their course for
me;
For soon there came another
knock
And some one cried: “’Tis eight
o’clock;
The morning boat is almost
due,
And Felix waits below for
you!”

An Idyl of the Rhine.

These words aroused my drowsy
brain
To wakefulness and conscious
pain,
For well they made me
understand
The parting hour was near at
hand.
A cooling plunge soon quite
restored
My shattered nerves, so my
adored
Was met with glances fresh and
bright,
Despite the vigils of the
night.
We reached the dock in time to
be
Too late; and, helpless, stand and
see,
In spite of frantic waves and
cries,
The boat move off before our
eyes.
Of course the blame was laid on
me.
I stood all censure
patiently,

Parting Scenes.

For Felix, ever kind and
 mild,
Had gently pressed my hand and
 smiled
While softly whisp'ring in mine
 ear:
"Another hour for us, my
 dear."
Beneath a tree at
 Rudesheim
We sat and sweetly passed the
 time
In planning future joys, to
 be
Conjointly shared by him and
 me
When martial law should leave him
 free
To seek a Land of
 Liberty,
Where every man may choose in
 life
His occupation and his
 wife.
The tardy moments quickly
 fly
When lovers wait to say
 good-by.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

A boat came steaming down the
Rhine;
Great, melting eyes looked down in
mine
And hearts beat wildly as it
bore
Directly for the classic
shore.
We stepped aboard, my Love and
I,
I choked and could not say
good-by,
So much I feared to sob
aloud
Before a curious, gaping
crowd.
But when I heard the captain
cry,
“Aboard!” and others shout
“Good-by!”
The world became a blank, and
he
Who held my hand, the world to
me.
I quickly raised my drooping
face
Toward his for one more sweet
embrace;

Parting Scenes.

And he, as quickly, bowed his
head,
And kissing me most fondly,
said,
In mingled tones of love and
pain :
*“Leben sie wohl, auf
wiederschen !”*
A moment after he had
gone,
And I, upon the deck,
alone,
In silent tears of grief
remained
To dream of Paradise
regained.
He stood and watched me from the
shore,
I saw him kiss a glove he
wore
And wave it in a last
adieu
Till glove and Love were lost to
view.

An Idyl of the Rhine.

L'Envoi.

Oh, gay, impulsive, trusting
youth,
Bright, hopeful days when life,
forsooth,
Is naught but sunbeams, love and
flowers,
And tears are only gentle
showers,
The joys which follow in thy
train
Soon leave us ne'er to come
again.
Enchanting days, too quickly
flown !
Had my fair springtime never
known
A romance so divinely
sweet
The season would be
incomplete.



MARY.

L'Envoi.

Tho' brief the passion we may
 feel,
The precious moments, which
 reveal
The depths of human bliss are
 fraught
With memories for tender
 thought.
Now, oftentimes, when the day is
 done
And stars come stealing, one by
 one,
Above me, in my dreams I
 see
A white glove wave a kiss to
 me
And in sweet fancy hear
 again:
“*Leben sie wohl! Auf
 wiederschen!*”



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